



HealthierUS School Challenge: Recognizing Nutrition Excellence in Schools

What is the HealthierUS School Challenge?

Obesity is a growing concern for school children in the United States. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) believes that schools should be taking a leadership role in helping students learn to make healthy eating and active lifestyle choices. Many schools have already made changes to their school nutrition environments, improved the quality of the foods served, and now provide students with more nutritious, healthy choices. USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) wants to encourage schools to achieve such results, and has established the HealthierUS School Challenge to encourage schools to go further and to recognize those who chose to do so.

HealthierUS Schools can be certified as either Silver or Gold Schools, according to standards established by FNS. The objective is to recognize schools that take specific steps to improve their programs and address obesity and to encourage other schools to follow their lead. Ultimately, FNS would like to see all schools take the challenge: Go for the Silver! Go for the Gold!

How Does it Work?

Schools must meet a basic set of criteria. To be certified, a school must:

- be an elementary school
- be enrolled as a Team Nutrition School
- offer reimbursable lunches that demonstrate healthy menu planning practices and principles of the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and that meet USDA nutrition standards
- provide nutrition education to students
- provide students the opportunity for physical activity
- maintain an Average Daily Participation of 70 percent or higher of school enrollment for reimbursable lunches

adhere to guidelines established by FNS for foods served/sold in schools outside the National School Lunch Program.

What Does This Mean for Montana Schools?

Montana is home to many schools that excel in healthy menu planning as part of a healthy school nutrition environment. The website for the HealthierUS School Challenge, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/HealthierUS/index.html>, provides detailed information on the menu criteria and application process for becoming a Silver or Gold certified school. Montana Team Nutrition staff is willing to assist with the application process. If you are interested in applying for a Silver or Gold Certification, please contact the Montana Team Nutrition Program for more information; Molly Stenberg at phone 406-994-7217 or email stenberg@montana.edu.

This is an opportunity to make your school the healthiest place possible and to achieve recognition for your outstanding school foodservice program! Team Nutrition will share menus and recipes from our award winning schools and will promote these stellar schools as models to aspire to!